

REMARKS

This application is a continuation of co-pending application serial no. 10/098,943 which has been allowed to lapse. Applicant is amending claims 1-19 and presenting herein new claims 20-28 for examination on the merits. Please note that claims 20-28 were previously presented in the parent case by way of preliminary amendment.

In an Office Action issued in the parent case (Serial No. 10/098,943) the Examiner rejected all the claims (including claims 20-28) for obviousness based upon Shahid (U.S. Pat. No. 6,352,372 in view of Uno et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 6,240,235), Matsumoto et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 6,577,803) and Japan 63-56616.

It is respectfully submitted that none of the above references, alone or in combination, render the instant claims obvious. In that regard it is noted that none of the references disclose or suggest having alignment holes or pins of original claims 5, 6 and 19 or newly added claims 20 through 28. This aspect appears to have been entirely overlooked by the Patent Office.

In addition, none of the cited references disclose or suggest the limitation in claim 1 of having the ferrule plates "maintained in alignment relative to each other by a pin passing, in common, through each of the ferrule plates". Similarly, they do not disclose or suggest, *inter alia*, the limitation of "an alignment hole extending between the pair of major surfaces" of independent claim 13, the "registration pin passing through both the first and second type of ferrule plate" of independent claim 17.

Moreover, the statement in the Office Action that it would have been obvious to combine the cited references because "[t]he above features would seem to provide better retention of the fibers in the grooves" has no basis in the cited art. Accordingly, it is respectfully suggested that the statement is based upon hindsight reconstruction or pure speculation, and

neither of which provide a proper legal basis for an obviousness rejection. The Office Action statement "[r]egarding the dimensions of the grooves and planar fiber array formed are deemed obvious design . . . due to design and routine experimentation" is respectfully traversed. If this position is maintained for any of the claims, specific citation of art supporting the position on a claim-by-claim basis is respectfully requested.

In light of the above, it is respectfully submitted that all of the claims are allowable over the cited art and early favorable action in that regard is requested.

In the event that a telephone conference would facilitate prosecution of the instant application in any way, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the number provided.


AUTHORIZATION

Applicant believes that no fees is necessary for the submission of this Preliminary Amendment, however, should any fees be due, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any such fees which may be required for this Preliminary Amendment, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 13-4500, Order No. 4024-4063. **A DUPLICATE COPY OF THIS SHEET IS ENCLOSED.**

Dated: May 5, 2004

By:

Respectfully submitted,
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